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Dear Rabbi Rosove:

I am replying to your message to Secretary Haig concerning the June 7 Israeli air attack on the nuclear reactor under construction in Iraq.

On June 8, the Department Spokesman condemned the Israeli air strike, noting that the unprecedented character of this action would seriously add to the already tense situation in the area and complicate our efforts to peacefully resolve problems there. The United States was not consulted in any way about any phase of the operation and was not informed of it in advance.

On June 10, the President suspended the scheduled delivery of four F-16 aircraft to Israel pending further study of the Israeli action and consultations with Congress. That same day, pursuant to Section 3 of the Arms Export Control Act, Secretary Haig sent letters to the Chairmen of the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committees indicating that a substantial violation of the 1952 U.S.-Israel Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement may have occurred. That agreement includes Israel's assurance that weapons acquired from the United States will be used only to maintain its internal security, its legitimate self-defense, or to permit it to participate in regional or United Nations (U.N.) collective security arrangements and measures. It also provides that Israel will not undertake any act of aggression against any other state. Israel has confirmed that the Israeli Air Force units involved in the air strike were equipped with defense articles furnished by the United States under the Foreign Military Sales Program.

On June 12, the United States voted for U.N. Security Council Resolution 487 condemning the Israeli attack, making clear our profound concern about Israel's impact on the peace and security of all the nations of the Middle East.

Rabbi John L. Rosove
Congregation Sherith Israel
2266 California Street

with the government of Israel. Neither our condemnation nor the suspension of delivery of the four aircraft is meant to imply that we have reached any determination on the questions raised under Sec. 102 of the Arms Export Control Act.

We have carefully noted the Israeli and Iraqi positions. Israel contends that its action against Iraq was a necessary, legitimate act of self-defense because the Iraqi reactor was intended to produce weapons grade material to make atomic bombs. Israel also points out that there is a state of war between the two countries and contends that Iraq had made clear its intention to produce such a weapon for use against Israel.

Iraq, on the other hand, denies that its nuclear program has any application other than peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Iraq points out that it has ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty and that its reactor and supply of enriched uranium were subject to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguard controls.

The United States does not believe that force can provide the answer to international disputes. Our condemnation of Israel's action was intended to clearly express this view. At the same time, the President's message to Prime Minister Begin made clear before the U.N. Security Council vote that we remain fully committed to the security and well-being of Israel and to the friendship between our two countries. The United States will continue to do all in its power to achieve a just and lasting peace for all the people of the Middle East.

Sincerely,

Assistant Secretary-Designate
for Public Affairs
and Department Spokesman